

## **Approved Summary Minutes**

### **Alexandria Waterfront Committee Meeting October 20, 2009**

**Members:** Henry Brooks  
Mel Fortney  
Mike Geissinger  
Doug Gosnell  
Linda Hafer  
Nathan Macek  
Peter Pennington  
Pete Peterson  
Susan Pettey

**City Staff:** Roger Blakeley, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA)  
Lt. Len Fouch, Police Department  
Jim Hixon, RPCA  
Lance Mallamo, Office of Historic Alexandria  
Rodney Masser, Fire Department  
John North, Fire Department  
Karl Moritz, Planning & Zoning (P&Z)  
Laura Seidler, RPCA  
Nancy Williams, P&Z

**Guests:** Dennis Burns, Burns & Associates  
Linda Couture  
Harry Harrington  
Andrew Larkin, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration  
Joanne Platt  
Van Van Fleet

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Committee members and guests introduced themselves.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the September meeting.

#### **Plans for Renovation of Waterfront Food Court**

Burns introduced the plan for renovation of the Torpedo Factory Pavilion food court behind the Torpedo Factory Art Center. The concept is to turn it into a restaurant pavilion instead of a food court pavilion. The plans include re-designing delivery access for the pavilion as well as the existing Chart House Restaurant. Plans include potentially adding a second story to the pavilion on the marina side to house another restaurant. The marketing plan calls for the three restaurants to be called "Torpedo Row."

In response to a question from Pennington, Burns said that the property is owned by the City and under a long-term lease to the developer. In response to a question from Macek, Burns said that potential restaurant tenants include groups that have the financial strength to manage a three-year ramp-up cycle, which could include local or national restaurant groups. In response to a question from Pettey, Burns said that there are plans to try to maintain some take-away food offerings at the site. In response to a question from Gosnell, Burns said that the development would not affect the existing parking garage underneath the building, with the exception of locating a grease trap. He did not foresee any reduction in parking spaces, however. In response to a question from Pennington, Burns said that public restrooms would continue to be located within the building, as would marina restrooms/bathrooms for boaters. Burns said that signs to the public restrooms are not prominently posted, but could easily be with additional signage.

### **NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System**

Larkin presented the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) concept to install an interpretive buoy near Woodrow Wilson Bridge. Before installation of the buoy, NOAA had no in-situ system for measuring tide, temperature, and wave height at Alexandria. The buoy will include interpretive information supporting the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, the country's first national water trail, which was established by Congress several years ago. The public will be able to receive both real-time weather and interpretive information from the buoy by calling toll-free 877/BUOY-BAY (877/286-9229) or online at [www.buoybay.org](http://www.buoybay.org). The information will also be incorporated into NOAA weather radio forecasts.

The purpose of NOAA's outreach is to inform local residents that the buoy system exists. This will be the eighth in the Chesapeake Bay Region and the fourth along Virginia waters.

In response to a question from Pennington, Larkin said the buoy location was selected because of the water depth, the width of the river (which enables the buoy to remain outside the shipping channel), and the proximity of public parklands where land-based interpretive signage related to the buoy can be located.

In response to a question from Van Fleet, Larkin demonstrated the approximate size of the buoy and said that it would be outside the shipping channel, which is marked by existing red and green buoys.

Mallamo said that the Office of Historic Alexandria had been working with NOAA and supports the program.

### **Update on Waterfront Planning**

Moritz said that initial phases of the waterfront planning process had focused on information gathering and that P&Z was now looking for feedback to ensure that it heard from the community correctly.

A number of guiding concepts for the waterfront plan have been identified:

- Strengthen views and enhance river access
- Treat arrival points as unique features and define the terminus of each view corridor with special features
- Continuous connection with the water
- Preserve and celebrate Alexandria's history
- Public art as a unifying element
- Improved shoreline treatments, for periodic (seasonal) flooding, storm surge, and long-term sea level change
- Manage transportation and parking, including bicycle traffic and transit options
- Expand water related activities
- Options for touching or putting feet in the water
- Environmental, economic, and operational sustainability

Concepts include:

- Connect and engage the foot of King Street with the waterfront, including a sense of arrival and anticipation. Options include the extension of the street along a pier into the water
- Activating and improving the public realm in the “waterfront core”—the vicinity of the City marina and The Strand—by providing more things to do such as a food hall
- Generate revenue to enhance the public realm, such as by providing options for outdoor dining, and right-sizing the marina to be self-sustaining
- Enliven The Strand with activity, including restaurants, museums, history-related themed exhibits, arts, and open space
- Respect the historic scale of The Strand by maintaining the pedestrian scale and character and applying development compatible with existing historic structures
- Connect The Strand with adjacent waterfront areas
- Improve public boat facilities and operations at the marina
- Reinvigorate the Torpedo Factory area
- Emphasize the gateway aspect of the City marina, including the introduction of a signature artwork to signify a sense of arrival
- Protect and beautify Founders Park—but do not upset the central character of the park
- Create a welcoming transition from the marina area to Founders Park, which is currently an awkward public space

- At Robinson Terminal North, create a waterfront destination that is a small-scale destination such as a boutique hotel. The pier at this site could be an inviting public space
- Acknowledge Oronoco Bay Park as a natural place for celebrations by improving facilities to support events and activities—including large concerts or small-scale events such as weddings
- Develop Oronoco Bay Park as a destination for families and children to broaden the appeal of the waterfront to families
- Create new ways to interact with the water on Oronoco Bay, such as by extending the boardwalk and offering non-motorized boating activities
- Increase the environmental sustainability of Oronoco Bay Park by softening the shoreline with natural plantings and by reducing the amount of rip-rap
- Build upon the approved plans for Windmill Hill Park and Jones Point Park
- Enhance the North End's rails and trails to provide transportation that supports the envisioned plan
- Increase access to the natural areas of Daingerfield Island, such as a waterfront trail or boardwalk

Next steps for the waterfront planning process include:

- Presentation to the Board of Architectural Review on Oct. 21
- City Council work session on Oct. 27
- Detailed set of options for public comment by Jan. 2010
- Draft plan by April-May 2010
- Public hearing and adoption by June 2010

In response to a question from Geissinger, Moritz said that there was preliminary information collected on the amount of parking in the vicinity of the waterfront. An inventory has been taken of on- and off-street parking. There's an estimate of demand from the utilization study. The next step is to determine who is coming to the waterfront and by what mode, which will be used to develop an estimate of the number of vehicles to expect, including for special events. Next, planners will determine whether the demand can be satisfied with existing garages, or whether additional parking could be required. Brooks suggested that electronic signage could connect people to open garages. Moritz said that this was being considered as part of the City's wayfinding program.

In response to a question from Pennington, Moritz said that the Resource Protection Area along the waterfront had been studied and mapped.

In response to a question from Couture, Moritz said that implementation and staging are part of the planning process. Couture noted that Crystal City had phased in initial improvements and has an ongoing plan for continuing improvements.

Pennington noted the importance of providing shade along the waterfront.

Petty asked whether the Committee had comments on suggestions for the marina, construction of a boardwalk, or other improvements that impact the water. Fortney noted that existing piers, boundaries, and other restrictions might limit the ability to construct piers or have man-powered boating activities on Oronoco Bay, but that could be investigated.

In response to a question from Pennington, Moritz said the study would examine how large the marina should be, what additional utilities are required, and the resulting impact on capital needs. In response to a question from Hafer, Moritz said that specific proposals regarding the marina would be documented in the proposals to be circulated in January.

Macek commended P&Z for the initial concepts developed to date, especially concepts to enhance City-owned properties along The Strand.

Van Fleet said that the plan had too much of an emphasis on commercial uses, and said more restaurants on the waterfront were unnecessary. Moritz and Geissinger responded that economic sustainability is important, and restaurants are one way to make the waterfront economically sustainable.

#### **Update on Waterfront Security**

Blakeley reported that the City had rejected the lone bid that it received to construct the marina gates. City staff has not had the resources to examine gates at neighboring marinas as promised, but plan to do so when current resource requirements to develop the Capital Improvement Plan are addressed.

The City is now working with the Coast Guard to enforce penalties against illegally docked boats. The Coast Guard believes illegally docked boats are a Homeland Security threat and will respond as required to assist the marina with this issue.

In response to a question from Gosnell, Blakeley said that the cameras have helped the City to monitor and improve the performance of waterfront security guards.

In response to a question from Brooks, Blakeley and Seidler said that they are closely examining RPCA groundskeeping equipment and supply storage requirements in the east end of the City to improve maintenance logistics.

Pennington asked whether there was anything the Committee could do to support city staff. Blakeley invited boaters to take pictures of potential options for pier gates from other marinas, including the underside of structures, and submit them to City staff.

**Marina Operations and Planning Subcommittee**

The Subcommittee had its first meeting on Sept. 17, 2009. There was a wide-ranging discussion on how the Marina would be envisioned if the City were starting from a clean slate. However, the Subcommittee recognized that it was not starting from a clean slate and is constrained by the status quo. Gosnell said that he would circulate notes from the Subcommittee meeting.

In response to a question from Fortney, Seidler said that City policy is that the marina may lease up to 20 percent of its slips to non-residents, a recent change (when 100 percent of slips were reserved for Alexandria residents). She said that occupancy is currently about 10 percent non-residents.

In response to a question from Fortney about involving additional pleasure boaters on the Subcommittee, Seidler said that the membership of City subcommittees have to be members of the actual committee, and that the meeting notices are publicized online and via email. Gosnell noted that the Subcommittee's perspective was broader than just that of pleasure boaters.

**Announcements**

Gosnell announced that there was an application for valet parking in front of Landini Brothers Restaurant on King Street, and noted that it could have implications if there were additional applicants. Moritz said that P&Z is developing a staff recommendation for approval of valet parking, including where to locate the cars (in off-street garages, not on-street spaces as had been the case previously) and how to mitigate congestion at the valet parking site. Pettey suggested that this could be placed on the agenda for the November meeting, and Moritz said he would provide more information to the Committee.

Pettey announced that Craig Perl of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services had received the consultant's report regarding flood mitigation and would present at the November meeting.

**Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned at 9:15 a.m.